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# *Margareta*, *Katerina* and *Kristina*. Female names in medieval Finland

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Jaakko Raunamaa, Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki: *Margareta*, *Katerina* and *Kristina*: Female names in medieval Finland.

**Abstract**

This article examines female first names used in medieval Finland (1319–1500), thereby shedding light on the kinds of names given to women in that region during the Middle Ages. The data consist of female first names found in editions of medieval documents, such as the series Finlands medeltida urkunder. The main finding is that the most popular medieval female names in Finland were *Margareta*, *Katerina*, *Kristina* and *Birgitta*. The majority of the popular names are names of both well-known saints and Scandinavian royals. The female nomenclature of Finland is similar to that of Denmark, northern Germany and Sweden. No pre-Christian Finnish female names or Finnish forms of Christian names are found in the sources studied.

Keywords: anthroponyms, female names, Christian names, Middle Ages, history of Finland, history of Sweden.

## 1. Introduction

This article gives an overview of female first names used in medieval Finland (1319–1500). It answers the following research questions: What kinds of names were used? How did naming conventions change during the Middle Ages? Were any pre-Christian female names used? Were the names used in Finland different from those found elsewhere in the Baltic Sea region?

Only a handful of studies have been made of the early naming systems of Finland (see 1.2 for further information) and no one has undertaken a study concentrating solely on medieval Finnish female personal names (see for example Blomqvist 2006 and Kiviniemi 1982). The limited range of sources is one of the main reasons why there is so little research on the topic. For example, just over ten thousand personal names are mentioned in the book series *Finlands medeltida urkunder* (FMU), whereas the number in the Swedish col-

lections of medieval personal names, *Sveriges medeltida personnamn* (SMPs), is many times larger than that.[1] It has even been claimed (Lahti 1950, p. 312) that female names used in medieval Finland cannot be studied because so few of them are mentioned in the sources.

In the present article, I attempt to show that this earlier claim is incorrect. I proceed as follows. In sections 1.1, 1.2 and 2, the necessary background information for a study of the topic is provided. In section 3, I explain how the data were collected. The main part of the work is in section 4, where I answer the research questions presented above. Section 5 sums up the article.

## 1.1 Women in Finnish medieval society

In general, a Finnish woman living in the medieval kingdom of Sweden was subordinate to men. First, she was subordinated to her father. When she married, she was subordinated to her husband, and if she was widowed, the eldest son became her keeper. A widow, however, could represent herself as the head of the property she had inherited from her husband (Korpiola 2009, pp. 23–86, 31 footnote; cf. Lindkvist 2003, p. 30; Schück 2003).

Finnish society was not as hierarchical during the Middle Ages as it was in the 17th century and subsequently, but social classes were still important (Kallioinen 2000, pp. 115–116). Marriages between different classes were rare. Knights would not allow their daughters to marry peasants, and they tried to avoid husbands from the lower nobility and the burgher class. Priests could not marry, but they had concubines who gave birth to their children (cf. Salonen 2009, pp. 155–156). It was more common for a girl to be married to a person one class lower than herself than the other way around (Suvanto 1976, p. 171; cf. Korpiola 2009, pp. 70, 31, footnote).

## 1.2 Pre-Christian personal names in Finland

Very little is known about the pre-Christian naming system in Finland or in any other Finnic culture. ('Pre-Christian' is used here in the sense of names that were not derived from Christian names and that were already used before western Finland was incorporated in the ecclesiastical taxation system in the early 13th century; see Raninen & Wessman 2015, p. 346.) Medieval documents include only a few pre-Christian personal names used as a person's

[1] See the web presentation on *Sveriges medeltida personnamn* and Ryman 2017. SMP, SMPs and SMPd (see note 8) also include mentions of names from Finland, since most of Finland was part of the Swedish realm during the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, they contain far more names from the current territory of Sweden than from Finland.

main name. Most of them are found in 14th-century documents. For example, a papal bull written in 1340 has pre-Christian anthroponyms that can be regarded as main names: *Melico* (*Mieli-kko*) *de Iudicala*, *Melita* (*Mieli-tty*) *de Hyrfala* and *Ye* (*Iha*) *de Oncala* (Kiviniemi 1982, p. 35; REA 99). Our knowledge of pre-Christian nomenclature is mainly based on old bynames, surnames, settlement names and names used among other Finnic tribes (Ainiala et al. 2012, p. 157; Kiviniemi 1982, p. 36). The Finnic name system is claimed to be similar to the Indo-European one (Stoebke 1964, pp. 133–135). This means that personal names originally consisted of two parts (e.g. *Kauko-mieli*), as in the Scandinavian pre-Christian system. At the beginning of the Middle Ages, pre-Christian Finnic male names were either simplex names (e.g. *Lempo*, *Mieli*, *Iha*), names with a suffix (*Lemmitty*, *Mielakka*, *Ihattu*), or compound names (*Hyvälempi*, *Mielivalta*, *Ihalempi*) (ibid., pp. 109–135).

Pre-Christian Finnic personal names were constructed semantically in such a way that they were descriptive and their meaning was comprehensible (Stoebke 1964, pp. 136, 139, 148). Children, however, were also named after their grandparents (or other forebears). In such a situation, the name could no longer be interpreted as descriptive.

Only a few examples of pre-Christian Finnic female names are to be found in previous studies. Stoebke (1964), for example, presents the following instances: *Meluta* (Finnish, p. 58), *Millie* (Estonian, p. 60), and *Vast* (Estonian, p. 74). Raag and Vanags (2010) also present four names, but do not mention any sources. It is still reasonable to assume that, in semantics and form, such names would have borne a likeness to male names. It has even been suggested (Raag & Vanags 2010, p. 24) that men and women used the same names in medieval Estonia. Given the number of female names in the sources, this suggestion is perhaps a bit far-fetched.

Names mentioned in Finnish folklore are a good source for comparison. In the epic poetry collection *Kalevala*, female characters have names such as *Louhi*, *Ainikki*, *Kyllikki*, *Mielikki* and *Terhenetär.* Similar names have also been used as names for cows. For example, cow names such as *Halikki*, *Helmi*(*kki*), *Hiilikki* and *Kauni*(*kki*) have been recorded in Karelia (Kuzmin 2017a). Similar names are used elsewhere in Finland, too (Vatanen 1997). This could mean that cow names have preserved old naming conventions.

Outside Finnic-speaking areas, pre-Christian female names are better known. Scandinavian names found on rune stones often consist of two parts, e.g. *Guðlaug, Þóra, Holmfríðr* and *Ingigærðr* (NRL). Slavic names are morphologically and semantically similar to Scandinavian ones, but there is one major difference. Female Slavic anthroponyms are usually derived from male names by adding the feminine suffix *-a*, e.g. *Miłek* : *Miłka* (Axnäs 1937, p. 57). Baltic cultures could have had a similar system. Only a few pre-Christian

female names are found in Lithuania, but it is probable that most such names were derived from male forms, e.g. male *Raudys* : female *Raudė* (Kuzavinis & Savukynas 1987, pp. 30–32).

## 2. Material and area of the study

The names studied are female names used in medieval Finland up to the year 1500. My main research data consist of anthroponyms found in a book series called *Finlands medeltidsurkunder* (FMU).[2] FMU comprises edited versions of various medieval documents, prepared mainly by Reinhold Hausen. Women are mostly named in bills of sale, wills, account books and court documents. Editions consisting only of short summaries of the contents of documents have also been included in the study, as they contain information about names, even though no transcription of the original document is presented. In addition, most of the summaries contain references to other sources in *Diplomatarium Fennicum* (DF; see footnote 2). In 15 cases I was unable to find an edition or copy of a document.

The majority of the documents in FMU are in Swedish, but some of the older ones are in Latin. Low German was also widely used in the Swedish realm and its vicinity, and documents connected to the burgher class, in particular, are in that language.

In addition to FMU, the following sources were used as research material: editions of documents of the Apostolic Penitentiary (APS), an edition of a church account book for the parish of Kalliala (Hausen 1881, pp. 357–420), and editions of the court records of Arboga (ATb) and Stockholm (STb).

The first of these institutions (APS) is a papal tribunal of mercy. People of the diocese of Åbo sent 127 petitions (in Latin) to this body between the years 1450 and 1521 (Salonen 2009, p. 187). Many couples of noble birth, for example, had to seek permission to marry if they were too closely related. Most of the petitions were sent by members of the Finnish nobility or burgher class (ibid., p. 178). The documents found at Kalliala Church, in turn, consist of accounts and notes written by local priests, in both Latin and Swedish, between 1469

[2] FMU (published 1910–1935) includes different kinds of editions of medieval documents concerning Finland. The editions are not produced in a consistent fashion. Some of them are transcribed versions of the originals, some combinations of two or more originals, and some are only summaries. Nowadays, the editions of FMU can be found in an online database known as *Diplomatarium Fennicum* (DF). FMU also includes summaries of REA (Registrum Ecclesiæ Aboensis), a collection of copied documents relating to the diocese of Åbo. It is assumed that they were copied during the 1470s and 1480s (REA, p. 9). I have gone through the REA documents which, according to FMU, contain female names.

and 1524. It is noteworthy that most of the people mentioned in these sources are peasants.

The court records of Arboga and Stockholm comprise documents produced by the town courts of Arboga and Stockholm. They include records of legal cases covering a variety of subjects, from moneylending to manslaughter. Both towns had a significant number of Finns, engaged in all kinds of professions. Finns are mostly recognised by the epithets given to them: e.g. *walborg finska* ('Finn', ATb 3, p. 96, cf. Ryman 2009) or *Elin Jönsses dotter, födh i Norrebotn i Nerpis sochn* ('Elin daughter of Jöns, born in Norrbotten in Närpis parish', STb 2, p. 431). Female Finns mentioned in these records were often wives of craftsmen, servants, or heirs of people who died in either of the towns. Most of the Finnish women mentioned were from western Finland and were probably of peasant origin.

In this study, I apply Reinhold Hausen's concept of Finland, which refers to the 20th-century territory, including some areas that are not part of present-day Finland (e.g. the ceded area of Karelia). The expression 'Finland' was little used in the Middle Ages. The eastern part of the Swedish kingdom was mostly called 'Österland'. Secular regional subdivisions were based on castles, which meant that the area of Finland was divided into castle provinces. Borders were still subject to change and new areas were incorporated in the Swedish kingdom.

Most of the material used in this study concerns areas of Finland Proper, Nyland, Satakunta, Tavastland and Åland. As can be seen in Figure 1, these formed the core of medieval Finland. Accordingly, large parts of present-day Finland have been left without a single mention. In addition, some sources are not within the scope of this article. For example, documents from Novgorod could provide additional information on speakers of more eastern variants of the Finnic languages. However, it is likely that very few women would be mentioned in those documents.[3]

[3] This information is based on Denis Kuzmin's knowledge of Karelian medieval sources (2017b). Janne Saarikivi found one female name (*Igolaidovaja*) in his study of Finnic personal names in Novgorod birch-bark documents (2007, p. 219). The name *Čjudka* is another possibility (ibid., p. 209).

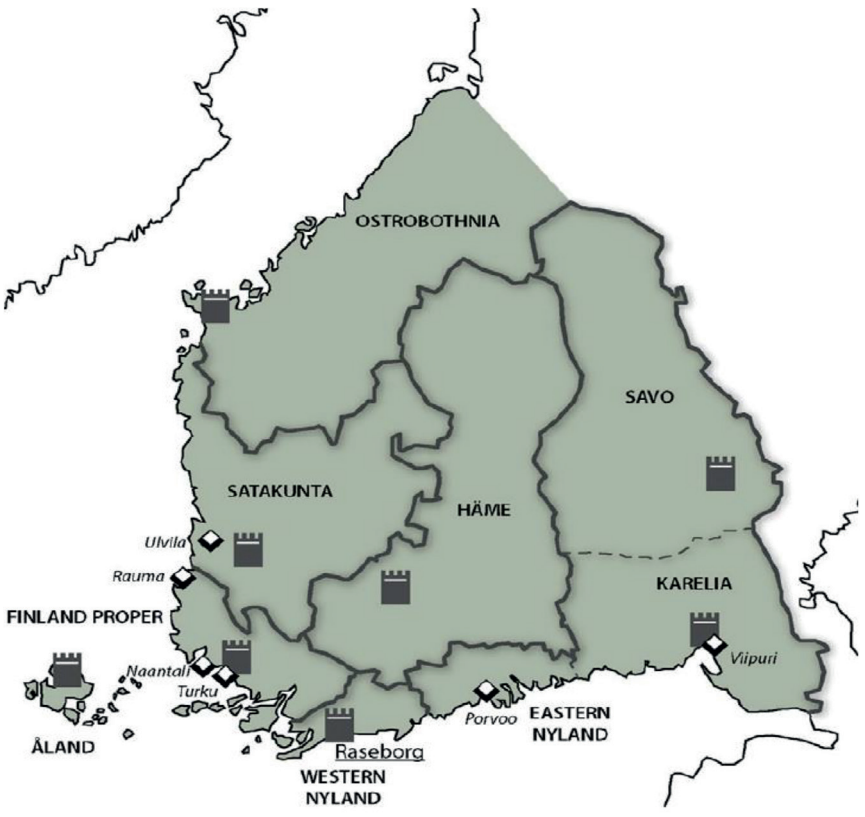


Figure 1. The late medieval castle provinces of Finland (diocese of Turku, Swedish Åbo). Names of the provinces in Finnish and (in parentheses) Swedish, starting from the left: Ahvenanmaa (Åland), Varsinais-Suomi (Egentliga Finland), Satakunta (Satakunta), Länsi-Uusimaa (Västra Nyland), Pohjanmaa (Österbotten), Häme (Tavastland), Itä-Uusimaa (Östra Nyland), Savo (Savolax) and Karjala (Karelen). Drawn by Maija Holappa.

## 3. Methodology

Names were collected from the sources in the following way. In the case of FMU, the name index was used to find and collect female names. Names outside the index were collected as well, if noticed. The editions of documents of the Apostolic Penitentiary (APS) and Kalliala Church (Hausen 1881, pp. 357–420) were read through. The court records of Arboga and Stockholm were studied by examining the name index and noting female names. Most of the Finnish women mentioned in the court records of Stockholm are covered in FMU as well, but only in summaries. In cases where a woman is mentioned

many times in different editions of documents, only the details of the oldest one were collected.

This study concentrates on Finnish female names, and thus non-Finnish (foreign) women were excluded. Only names of women who may be assumed to have been born within the area of Finland or lived most of their lives there were included in the study. To eliminate non-Finnish women from the study, I tried to collect as much documentation as possible concerning the origins of the women (other medieval documents, local histories, family histories, taxation documents and so on). In particular, Swedish and Finnish noble families are well studied (e.g. Ramsay 1909 and ÄSF), which helped to determine the origins of noblewomen.[4]

Women from merchant families presented greater difficulty. Merchants moved frequently in pursuit of better business opportunities (Kallioinen 2000, pp. 103–104), which makes it difficult to know exactly where a girl of a merchant family was born. Luckily, there are a number of studies dealing with the merchants working in medieval Finland (e.g. Kallioinen 2000). These were helpful in establishing which merchants lived in Finland, and were not just visiting the country.

Documents relating to the lower social classes (mainly peasants) are so sporadic that usually it is impossible to say where a person is from. It is often mentioned, however, that a woman is living in some Finnish village or parish.[5] In that case, it is also likely that she was born close by (cf. Maija-Liisa Heikinmäki 1981, pp. 23–25, regarding marriage patterns among Finnish peasants in the 18th century).

After all the women who could be assumed to be non-Finnish had been excluded from the study material, all the Finnish ones were collected in a table. An example is found above (see Figure 2). Each individual is mentioned only once in the table. The names are given in alphabetical order, based on their normalised forms. Name forms from the documents are normalised, in particular, following SMP and SMPs (e.g. *Katrin* and *Karin* are considered subforms of *Katerina*).

[4] In this text, the expression 'nobility' is used in a broad sense: I have included all individuals whose families owned 'frälse' ('tax-free' land) as nobility. Additionally, relatives and family members of squires have been included. Otherwise, whether or not a person belongs to the nobility is dealt with case by case.

[5] There are also cases where the place of origin of a woman's male relative(s) is stated. If, for example, the origins of her father are stated, it may be assumed that the woman in question was originally from the same area (cf. FMU 4553). In some cases, relatives are from different regions, for example, from Sweden and Finland. I have not included these cases in my study, unless there is other evidence suggesting that the woman mentioned is from Finland.

| Name | Spelling | Year | Location of signature (according to FMU) | Bynames (patronym, epithet, surname) and relatives | Social class | Home municipality (The name of a village or a manor is inside the brackets) | Type of document | Source (e.g. FMU 100 = FMU s.v. 100) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adeliza | Adelitza | 1466 | Åbo | wife of Hans van Asken | nobility (cf. Vähäkangas 1977) | | bill of sale | FMU 605 |
| Adeliza | Ælitzsa | 1468 | Åbo | Nilsdotter (Stjernkors), sister of dean Magnus Nilsson | nobility | Tövsala (Särkilax) (cf. Suvanto 2000b) | donation | FMU 3357 |
| Adeliza | Allecia | 1469 | Rome | Henriksdotter (Horn), wife of Magnus Nilsson | nobility | Halikko (Åminne) (cf. FIFiso: 181) | petition | APS 156 |
| Agnes | Agnes | 1469 | Nakkila | wife of Henrik Seppä | peasant | Nakkila; Her court case was handled there, which means she is from somewhere close. | court document | FMU 3375 |
| Anna | Anna | 1380 | Santamala (nowdays in Nousis) | *Hönalempadotter* (~ Hyvälempi's daughter) | nobility ?; Anthoni thinks her father was part of frälse (FMF: 85, 92). | Reso; At least in Finland Proper (ibid.) | bill of sale | REA 244 |

Figure 2. An example from the name table.

The table includes specific details about each name-bearer. First, there is the normalised form of the name. Second, the attested name forms are recorded. Third, the date and place of the original document are given. Next, there are details of the name-bearer's family. In addition, there are assessments of the name-bearer's social class and birthplace. Finally, the purpose of the document (e.g. will, donation, bill of sale etc.) is documented along with the reference number in FMU, REA, APS or Hausen 1881. References to editions of the court records of Arboga (ATb) and Stockholm (STb) consist of the relevant volume and page numbers.

This study concentrates on numbers of lexically distinct medieval female first names. In addition, occurrences of names in different periods are studied, together with their orthography. The other fields in the table are used to support various claims and conclusions.

## 4. Female names in medieval Finland

In all, 541 women are mentioned by name in the material studied, bearing 51 lexically distinct names. In documents from the 14th century, only 42 women are named, which means that some 90 per cent of the names found are from the 15th century. Figure 3 and Table 1 present overall numbers of occurrences of the different names. It must be emphasised that the results offer only limited insight into the female naming conventions of Finland. As stated earlier, the documents do not cover the whole of present-day Finland. Most of them relate to western Finland and coastal areas.

The social background of the women mentioned is another limiting factor. The largest share of the women referred to belong to the nobility, the second-largest to the burgher class. It is impossible to give exact figures, but approximately every second woman represents one of these social classes.

In reality, these women made up a small minority (see Orrman 1981, p. 129). Naturally, the higher classes were more literate and also owned more property. Documentation of land purchases, wills, records of morning gifts and so on were necessary to families if they wanted to retain their property (Roos 1959, p. 6). The results of this study, however, suggest that there were only minor differences in naming conventions between peasants and nobles. The burgher class was a slightly different matter, as their naming conventions were so strongly influenced by German customs. Many of the women with noble or burgher roots are mentioned in documents concerning the Brigittine abbey in Nådendal (Naantali). Overall, around 15 per cent of all the women mentioned in the sources studied were connected in some way to the abbey.

The results are analysed here from various perspectives. First, the most popular medieval female names are identified. In addition, an overview is given of the most popular names in the Baltic Sea region. Subsequently, an explanation is provided for the kinds of changes that occurred in naming conventions during the Middle Ages. Finally, the Finnish influence on the orthography of the names is discussed, and explanations are proposed for the lack of pre-Christian Finnish female names in the sources.

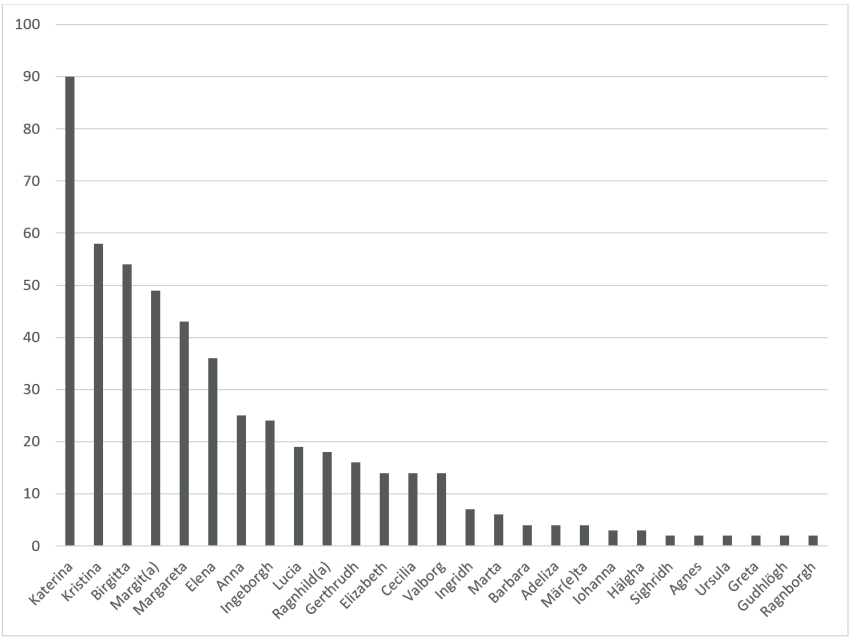


Figure 3. Numbers of female names 1319–1500. Names with two or more bearers are presented.

Table 1. Names in alphabetical order, with numbers of occurrences. The year when a name is first mentioned is given in parentheses. An asterisk (*) indicates that the form of the name is obscure.[6]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Adeliza** (1380) | 4 | **Iohanna** (1448) | 3 |
| **Agnes** (1469) | 2 | **Iudit** (1468) | 1 |
| **Alet(a)** (1449) | 1 | **Katerina** (1332) | 90 |
| **Anna** (1380) | 25 | **Klara** (1455) | 1 |
| **Apollonia** (1448) | 1 | **Kristina** (1336) | 58 |
| **Barbara** (1462) | 4 | **Kunne** (1435) | 1 |
| **Beata** (1479) | 1 | **Lucia** (1370) | 19 |
| **Benedikta** (1490) | 1 | **Lykka** (1481) | 1 |
| **Birgitta** (1407) | 54 | **Margareta** (1330) | 43 |
| **Bothild** (1483) | 1 | **Margit(a)** (1478) | 49 |
| **Brynhild** (1330) | 1 | **Marta** (1460) | 6 |
| **Cecilia** (1357) | 14 | **Mekthild** (1496) | 1 |
| **Disa** (1374) | 1 | **Meluta*** (1319) | 1 |
| **Dorothea** (1477) | 1 | **Metta** (1485) | 1 |
| **Elena** (1325) | 36 | **Mær(e)ta** (1476) | 4 |
| **Elizabeth** (1353) | 14 | **Ragnborgh** (1440) | 2 |
| **Fuska*** (1385) | 1 | **Ragnhild(a)** (1380) | 18 |
| **Gerthrudh** (1331) | 16 | **Rikiza** (1449) | 1 |
| **Greta** (1414) | 2 | **Sighløgh** (1322) | 1 |
| **Gudhløgh** (1397) | 2 | **Sighridh** (1445) | 2 |
| **Gunhild** (1489) | 1 | **Signhild** (1371) | 1 |
| **Hælgha** (1418) | 3 | **Tola** (1445) | 1 |
| **Iliana** (1496) | 1 | **Truda** (1451) | 1 |
| **Ingeborgh** (1350) | 24 | **Ursula** (1477) | 2 |
| **Ingegærdh** (1449) | 1 | **Valborg** (1410) | 14 |
| **Ingridh** (1440) | 7 | | |

[6] Anthoni (1970, p. 50, footnote) believes that *Fuska* is an erroneously copied form of the name **Finska*. It is difficult to say what the origin of *Meluta* is (see 4.5).

## 4.1 Popular names in the Middle Ages

The overall numbers of names collected show clearly that *Birgitta*, *Katerina*, *Kristina*, *Margareta* and *Margit*(*a*) were the ones most commonly used. (*Margareta*, *Margit*(*a*) and *Mær*(*e*)*ta* are later considered as a single category, *Margareta*, with 96 bearers. Most mentions of these names are in the form *Margareta*; cf. Otterbjörk 1992.) Altogether, approximately 55 per cent of the women in question were given one of these names. Thus, there was only limited scope for name variation. Naming was very conventional and was probably based on the examples of ancestors, as this was common in the giving of male names (cf. Leibring 2016, pp. 205–207, and Valtonen 2017, p. 307). Family traditions, however, do not explain the establishment of a Christian naming culture. There must have been external influences that made Christian female names popular.

*Birgitta*, *Katerina*, *Kristina* and *Margareta* (like the majority of other names) had a close relationship with the Church (cf. USN). These four are the names of female saints who were well known in the north of Europe.[7] Naming children after the saints became popular in Western Europe from the 12th century onwards (Ainiala et al. 2012, p. 150). It is likely that the local aristocracy in Scandinavia first followed the example set by Continental Europe. Names like *Katerina, Kristina* and *Margareta* were used by Scandinavian royalty during the first centuries of the second millennium (see SBL s.v. Katarina, Kristina and Margareta '*fredkulla*').

There is no direct evidence that the Church directed naming conventions in medieval Finnish society. It is nevertheless clear that its clergy exerted a major influence. For example, Johannes Westfal, bishop of Turku from 1370 to 1385, was keen to promote the cult of St Catherine (Palola 2000). It was not only the Church that promoted saints; it was in the interests of the Swedish realm to do so as well. Saints were systematically used to build and unite the people of medieval Sweden (Ellis Nilsson 2015, pp. 30–31). However, the impact of the Church has also been questioned. For example, Anti Selart (2016, p. 181) argues that names used by higher social classes were a bigger contributor to the name-giving of common people in Europe than the saints promoted by the Church. Selart's idea has some merit, but is perhaps more applicable to areas where feudalism was widely practised and society was highly hierarchical. The case of medieval Finland is different, as about 90 per cent of the land was owned by the peasants themselves and not by the nobility or the Church (Orrman 1981, p. 129).

[7] For *Birgitta* see Farmer 2011, s.v. Bridget of Sweden; for *Katerina* see Heikkilä & Suvikumpu 2009, pp. 133–138, and Farmer 2011, s.v. Catherine (Katharine) of Alexandria; for *Kristina* see Heikkilä & Suvikumpu 2009, p. 14, and Farmer 2011, s.v. Christina; for *Margareta* see Heikkilä & Suvikumpu 2009, p. 14, and Farmer 2011, s.v. Margaret of Antioch.

The examples provided by royalty and the nobility certainly affected the naming culture. Stories and cults of Scandinavian royals were known in Finland (see e.g. Mäkelä-Alitalo & Palola 2000). Parents in all likelihood hoped that the attributes connected with the given name would also transfer to their child (cf. Ainiala et al. 2012, pp. 127–128).

Merchants must have played an important role in spreading new ideas, including names. It was merchants of the Hanseatic League who controlled trade in the Baltic Sea area (Kallioinen 2000, pp. 165–203). Female names influenced by German are usually easy to spot (e.g. *Adeliza*, *Greta* and *Gertrud*). German merchants preferred to marry their own kind, enabling their nomenclature to endure in foreign countries (ibid., pp. 142–144).

## 4.2 Female names elsewhere in the Baltic Sea region

*Katerina, Kristina* and *Margareta* were also the most popular names in medieval Sweden (SMPd) and in Denmark (Søndergaard 2000, p. 19).[8] In medieval Norway, too, *Katerina, Kristina* and *Margareta* were popular (Dybdahl 2008, pp. 118, 120, 123, 126), but not as much as in Finland, Denmark and Sweden.

*Margareta, Katharina, Elisabeth, Anna* and *Agnes* were the most commonly used medieval female names in German-speaking areas (Kunze 1998, p. 45). In Estonia and in medieval Riga, saints' names were also popular, under German influence (Must 1960; Siliņa-Piņķe 2014, pp. 184–185).

It is useful to compare medieval naming in Sweden to that in Finland. In the end, large areas of present-day Finland were ruled by the Swedish realm. First of all, it is interesting that the name *Anna* was more popular in Sweden than in Finland (Figure 3 and SMPd). It was only in the 12th century that the cult of St Anne really began (Farmer 2011, s.v. Anne) and it was not until the 15th century that it arrived in Sweden (Otterbjörk 1992, p. 142, SMP s.v. *Anna* fasc. 105). The rather late spread of this cult could explain why the name *Anna* did not become as popular in remote Finland.

Second, there are many more pre-Christian Scandinavian female names in Sweden than there are in Finland. Surviving pre-Christian names in Scandinavia are a phenomenon that has also been observed in previous research (Kiviniemi 1982, p. 61). As noted below, there is only one possible Finnish (or Finnic) pre-Christian female name in the sources. Reasons for this difference

[8] SMPd (the digital version of SMP and SMPs) does not give the exact numbers of different names, but their approximate frequencies. These are based on how many times a particular name is mentioned, not on the number of name-bearers. It should also be noted that in SMPd *Margareta* (frequency value 1,900), *Margit*(*a*) (1,100) and *Mæret*(*a*) (576) are counted as distinct names. For this study, I have calculated their approximate combined frequency as 3,600.

are discussed in 4.5. However, most of the more frequent pre-Christian names in Sweden are connected to saints, royalty, or both.[9] This could be seen as evidence of the Church and higher social classes having had an influence on the use of female personal names.

## 4.3 Changes in naming conventions during the Middle Ages

As can be seen from Figure 4, only minor changes in naming conventions occurred. Naturally, the overall quantity of source material prevents us from drawing firm conclusions on shifts in fashions, particularly since about 90 per cent of all the names are from the 15th century. The results nevertheless agree with earlier research findings. The first centuries of the second millennium were a period of rapid cultural and social change (Kallioinen 2001, p. 27). After this, living conditions became stable and times of peace lasted right through to the later half of the 16th century (ibid., p. 11). This description is especially applicable to the areas of western Finland where most of the female names are from. It may be noted in particular that one female name, *Birgitta*, became popular in Finland after the 14th century. The first locally born *Birgitta* is mentioned in 1407, and after that the number grew rapidly. By the end of the 15th century, *Birgitta* was the third most used name, having become popular in all social classes.

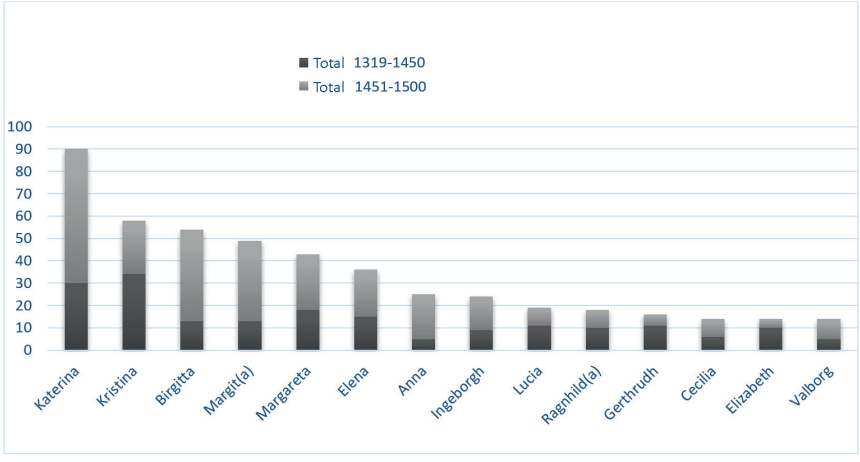


Figure 4. Numbers of female names used in medieval Finland. The darker bars represent names from 1319–1450, the lighter bars names from 1451–1500. Names with ten or more bearers are presented.

[9] Scandinavian saints are well described by Sara Ellis Nilsson (2015) and female royalty by Herman Lindqvist (2006).

According to SMP, *Birgitta* is originally an Old Irish name for the Celtic goddess *Brigantia*, made popular by St Brigit of Ireland. SMP records show that *Birgitta* was already a familiar name in Sweden in the 13th century. It became popular there, however, after the death of St Bridget (Birgitta) of Sweden. Her cult quickly became a trend that was promoted throughout the Swedish realm and elsewhere in northern Europe. It is likely that the Church and the Swedish aristocracy were willing to support the cult of Birgitta because both wanted to raise their prestige as they had done with other native saints. Promotion of the cult worked well, as can be observed from old Finnish folklore, which has many stories about Birgitta. (Ellis Nilsson 2015; Farmer 2011, s.v. Bridget of Sweden; Setälä & Mäkelä-Alitalo 2000.)

*Kristina*, meanwhile, is an example of a name whose popularity decreased according to the sources. As shown by Table 2, use of this name had declined further by the late 16th century. There is no simple way to explain why *Kristina* became less popular. One reason could be that none of the saints bearing that name enjoyed the same popularity in Scandinavia as, for example, Margaret of Roskilde (Ellis Nilsson 2015, p. 135) or St Catherine (Palola 2000) had. The medieval calendar of saints held by the diocese of Åbo, moreover, has no mentions of Kristina (Kiviniemi 1982, pp. 68–69). In addition, no medieval Finnish churches were named after her, whereas there were churches named after Anna, Birgitta, Katerina, Margareta and Maria (Hiekkanen 2003).

It is useful to compare the results of this study with those of Ingwar Fredriksson's (1974). He carried out a study in which he collected names used in the kingdom of Sweden from documents dating from 1571 to 1590. What is especially useful is that he presented his results at a regional level. This means that the results pertinent to Finland can easily be extracted.

Table 2. Numbers of the most popular female names used in Finland in the late 16th century. The table is based on Ingwar Fredriksson's study (1974), which includes 297 named women who were from Finland. Only names with ten or more bearers are presented. Names are normalised in accordance with SMP and SMPd, but different forms of Margareta are all grouped under one name.

| **Name** | **Number of occurrences** |
|---|---|
| Margareta | 53 |
| Katerina | 47 |
| Birgitta | 41 |
| Valborg | 29 |

| **Name** | **Number of occurrences** |
|---|---|
| Anna | 28 |
| Kristina | 15 |
| Elena | 14 |
| Magdalena | 12 |

As Table 2 shows, *Margareta*, *Katerina* and *Birgitta* remained popular in the 16th century. The popularity of *Kristina*, however, was still decreasing, as discussed above. A new name on the list is *Magdalena*, which had quickly become popular since its first mention in Sweden in 1455 (Otterbjörk 1992, p. 175). It appears in connection with the rise in popularity of Mary Magdalene. Her cult was promoted by the Catholic Church from the 12th century onwards, and in northern European prints and paintings she became popular from about 1450 to 1550 (Moseley-Christian 2012, pp. 399–406).

The name *Valborg* is surprisingly high on the list. The parishes of Vemo, Nykyrko and Letala had altogether 12 mentions of this name, which is unexpected (Fredriksson 1974, p. 85). Areas that have four or more mentions of *Valborg* are located in coastal parts of Finland and had strong Swedish-speaking populations. However, we should not draw too far-reaching conclusions, because there are clearly region-specific differences in the number of female names mentioned. Fredriksson did not find any female names in some areas, compared with 42 such names in the previously mentioned Vemo, Nykyrko and Letala area.

Fredriksson (1974, p. 165) also calculates a total figure for all his female names in the kingdom of Sweden. The results are very similar to those attested for Finland: *Margareta* represents about 16, *Karin* 14 and *Birgitta* 12 per cent of all the female names. The percentage of *Kristina* is still fairly high (approx. 8 per cent), at least compared with Table 2, which shows only the names found in Finland.

## 4.4 Finnish forms of the names

It is natural to assume that the Finnish-speaking population had its own spoken forms of the medieval names recorded, as later sources suggest. All the names were of foreign origin and included phonemes such as *b* or *g*, which were unknown to most Finns (Lehtinen 2007, p. 174). There are many cases of Finnish forms of male names occurring in editions of medieval documents: e.g. *Anti* corresponding to Swedish *Anders* (REA 331) and *Olli* corresponding to Swedish *Olaf* (FMU 6641) (cf. Blomqvist 2017, pp. 160–163). However, there are no signs of Finnish forms of female names in the material studied, such as *Pirkko* or *Pirita* instead of Swedish *Birgitta*. This even applies to scribes with a knowledge of the Finnish language (Blomqvist 2017). Reasons for this are discussed in the following.

First of all, it must be emphasised that Finnish forms of male names make up a clear minority of all the names given for men. No exact number can be given, but it would be safe to say that over 90 per cent of all the names in FMU

are male and, of these, only a small portion (1–5 per cent) are Finnish. Thus, the likelihood of finding Finnish forms of female names in medieval sources is very low. There are, however, sources such as the accounts of Kalliala Church (Hausen 1881, pp. 357–420), where one can find many examples of Finnish forms of male names: e.g. *Marti* (*Martin*), *Anti* (*Anders*), *Kauppi* (*Jakob*) and *Villi* (*Vilhelm*). In contrast, there are no Finnish name forms for any of the women mentioned in the same source. Thus, it can be suggested that, besides the shortage of sources, there could be other reasons for the lack of Finnish forms of female names in the material studied.

The habits and practices of medieval writing are probably one reason for the lack of Finnish female name forms. Medieval scribes did not have common rules of grammar or spelling practices (Blomqvist 2017, p. 90), but the language and type of a document did very much affect the writing style, and also the orthography of personal names (ibid., pp. 161–162, 216–226). It is still difficult to tell why scribes and other people with writing skills did not use any Finnish forms of female names. One suggestion could be that men, who were legally more important than women, were often mentioned as witnesses, sellers, victims and so on, and thus their names had more importance than those of women. It has also been suggested (Blomqvist 2017, pp. 221–222) that the role of a man in a legal document affected the way his name was presented. Names of issuers, victims or sellers, for example, were more formally expressed than those of witnesses or members of juries (Swedish *nämndemän*). The sources used for this study suggest that women very rarely appeared in the role of a witness or jury member, which again could explain the lack of recorded Finnish female name forms.

Despite the lack of Finnish forms, there is variation in the orthography of medieval female names. *Katerina* appears in forms such as *Kaderin*, *Kadrin* and *Karin*; *Kristina* in forms that included *Cristin*, *Crestin*, *Kerstin* and *Kirstin*; and *Margareta* in forms such as *Marit*, *Margeta*, *Margit* and *Margreth*.

An additional reason for this variation is the abundance of copies. In the main catalogue of *Diplomatarium Suecanum* (SDHK) there are 3,703 documents which are also found in FMU.[10] Of these, 1,105 are original documents. In other words, most of the medieval documents from Finland are copies made during or after the Middle Ages. Scribes could correct names to their own liking when copying the original medieval documents. Furthermore, we need to take into consideration the fact that editions are not always reliable (see Blomqvist 2017, p. 137).

[10] FMU documents were searched using the search command: Tryckt [Printed] = FMU. Original documents were found by adding the following command: Källor [Sources] = or*. In addition, an entry ‘Original’ was chosen.

## 4.5 Pre-Christian names

As just noted, no Finnish forms of female names occur in the material studied. Accordingly, no definite pre-Christian Finnish or Finnic female names are mentioned either. Only *Meluta* (REA 17) is a possibility; Stoebke (1964, p. 58) compares it with the male name *Meluncta* and Roos (1971, p. 81) assumes that the name *Meluta* is derived from the old Finnic personal name element *Meeli-*/*Mieli-*. The same applies to 16th- and 17th-century sources concerning Finland: pre-Christian female names have not been found (Kiviniemi 1982, Stoebke 1964).

The number of male pre-Christian Finnish names is not large either, but they can at least be counted in their dozens (Stoebke 1964). Certainly, men generally are mentioned many times more often than women in medieval documents (see the previous section). Additionally, as stated earlier (1.2), medieval documents include only a few pre-Christian male names used as main names. Pre-Christian name elements mostly occur in bynames, patronyms, surnames and settlement names, which were rarely based on female names. This can be explained by the importance of family. In other words, men were the ones who represented their families. Main names, surnames, epithets, patronyms etc. were all signs of a man's origins. A woman did not have similar importance as a representative of her family. In many medieval documents, women were identified using their father's or husband's name: for example, *relicta Horkoy* (Hausen 1881, p. 370) and *kawpinpoyca læski* (ibid., p. 374).[11]

In medieval Estonia, pre-Christian anthroponyms were still in widespread use right through to the 15th century (Roos 1976, p. 106). Nevertheless, as stated in the introduction, only a few female pre-Christian names have been found in Estonian sources. It seems that naming conventions changed rather quickly in Estonia; in the 16th century, Christian names already represented the clear majority (Roos 1976, p. 106; Saar 2018).

Pre-Christian male names prevailed until the 16th century in the eastern Finnic regions that were part of the Novgorod Republic. For example, taxation documents from the year 1500 show that in eastern Ingria, south of what is now St Petersburg, there were peasants called *Lembit' Fedkov'*, *Jahno Toivuev'* and *Igalko Kavguevy* (POKV I, pp. 299, 300, 307). Finnic pre-Christian main names, however, form only a small minority compared with Orthodox names. Thus, it is not entirely straightforward to claim (cf. Selart 2016, p. 183) that they were still relatively common in the 16th century. In addition, women are rarely mentioned in 16th-century tax documents, and it seems that all the

[11] Latin *relicta* 'widow'; *læski* (Finnish *leski*) 'widow'.

female names found there are of either Christian or Slavic origin (cf. NPK III; POKV I–II).

A comparison with Swedish pre-Christian nomenclature is also interesting. It should be remembered that, as stated in the introduction, written sources concerning areas of Sweden are much more extensive. Despite this, it is clear that in Sweden pre-Christian female names were more prevalent than in Finland. Names already used in Viking Age Scandinavia were still in use during the Middle Ages (see e.g. Modéer 1964, pp. 18–31, 36–37, 42).

The same pre-Christian female names as were popular in Sweden were also used in Finland. Examples include *Ingeborgh*, *Ragnhild*(*a*), *Ingridh*, *Gudhløgh* and *Ragnborgh*, many bearers of which were members of the nobility. At the same time, many of these names can be found, in particular, in Nyland and Åland, where they were used by peasants. Both provinces are areas in which Swedish immigrants settled during the first centuries of the second millennium (Haggrén 2015, p. 421). It would be tempting to regard ancient Scandinavian names in Nyland and Åland as a possible sign of continuing pre-Christian naming conventions. This is backed by the assumption that in Denmark (Sørensen 1990, p. 396) and Sweden (Dahlbäck 1997, p. 178; Ellis Nilsson 2015, p. 22) saints' names did not become popular until the beginning of the 14th century. However, it is a commonly accepted fact that the Swedish settlers were already Christian (Poutanen 2011, p. 11). It is also noteworthy that Swedes settled in coastal areas, enabling them to maintain ties with the Swedish mainland (Haggrén 2015, p. 502).

There is no simple answer as to why medieval sources have not preserved any pre-Christian Finnish or Finnic female names. The number and nature of the sources is one major reason; as stated earlier, women are only rarely mentioned in documents. Nevertheless, this cannot be the only reason. By the end of the 15th century, sources are so comprehensive that pre-Christian female names would probably have appeared if they had still been in use.

The absence of Finnish pre-Christian personal names is to some extent connected to the Christianisation of Finland. In short, Finland was converted with the help of foreign forces and influences (Raninen & Wessman 2015, pp. 338–359), whereas in Sweden the process was more of an internal development (Nilsson 1996, pp. 433–437). The locations of new church sites are a good illustration of the Christianisation process in Finland. Basically, most of the oldest churches and vicarages were built next to pre-Christian cult sites (Suvanto 1973, p. 386) or prehistoric manors (Finnish *moisio*) (Anthoni 1970, p. 17; Haggrén 2015, p. 384). This would suggest that the Church conquered the areas of old leaders and their places of worship. The rise of a foreign nobility in Finland can also be linked to military and cultural superiority. The nobility,

who originated mostly from Sweden and Germany, established their manors in places where Iron Age burial sites were situated (Anthoni 1970, pp. 18–22).

The beginning of a permanent Swedish influence not only affected the religion and the upper classes, but also the living conditions of ordinary people. This can be seen from the rapid spread of new settlements in the 14th and 15th centuries. Many of the remote and sparsely inhabited areas in Finland were permanently settled during those centuries (Haggrén 2015, p. 412; Raninen & Wessman 2015, pp. 354–355). The population grew rapidly as well (Haggrén 2015, p. 423).

All in all, it is safe to say that Finnish society was in turmoil during the first centuries of the second millennium. This must have affected the way people named their children, because anthroponyms have always been influenced by the surrounding society (cf. De Stefani 2016, p. 54). It may also be noted that personal names are loaned from language to language more readily than other language elements (Ainiala et al. 2012, p. 136). Thus, the lack of Finnish pre-Christian female names in medieval sources is not surprising. When society changed together with its religion, it is natural that anthroponyms would be affected as well. The almost total lack of pre-Christian female personal names in medieval documents concerning, for example, Estonians (Saar 2018), Ingrians and Votes (NPK III; POKV I–II) or Lithuanians (Kuzavinis & Savukynas 1987, pp. 30–32) reveals that the situation in Finland is not unique.

## 5. Conclusions

The main aim of this article was to examine what kinds of names women had in medieval Finland. As stated at the outset, it has previously been claimed (Lahti 1950, p. 312) that this cannot be done, as so few female names are mentioned in medieval sources relating to Finland. The present study suggests that that claim is not true, even if, for example, most of the names found are from western Finland and most of the name-bearers are from the higher social classes. Despite the disadvantages that entails, this article sheds light on many previously unknown things about the female names used in medieval Finland and supports many of the assumptions mentioned briefly in previous research.

As stated at the beginning of the article, no study has previously been made which focuses on the female names of medieval Finland. Nevertheless, Eero Kiviniemi (1982, p. 76) has assumed that in the 16th century female names in Finland and Sweden were similar. This article shows that that was the case not only in the 16th century, but during the Middle Ages as well. The most popular names in Finland were *Margareta, Katerina, Kristina* and *Birgitta*, and the

same ones were more or less as popular in Sweden. In addition, this study suggests that little change occurred in naming conventions in Finland during the Middle Ages. *Birgitta*, however, is the most visible example of such a change, being mentioned first in 1407 and becoming one of the most popular names by the end of the same century.

Kiviniemi (1990, p. 143) has also stated that the most popular male names of the 16th century were used by more than half of all name-bearers in some areas of Finland. Medieval female names are similar to 16th-century male names in that respect, with *Birgitta*, *Katerina*, *Kristina* and *Margareta* the ones most commonly used. Approximately 55 per cent of women were given these names. According to the material studied here, no Finnish forms of female names were used in medieval documents. For example, a Finn with the name *Pirkko* would have been called *Birgitta* in a medieval document written in Swedish.

Researchers have previously observed that the change from a pre-Christian naming culture to the new Christian one was very comprehensive (cf. Ainiala et al. 2012, p. 159), based mainly on the fact that only a few Finnish pre-Christian male names are attested in medieval sources. The total lack of female pre-Christian names in those sources proves that the change from old naming conventions to new really was complete. The decline in pre-Christian names was, moreover, a common phenomenon in Continental Europe during the last centuries of the Middle Ages. In addition, it seems that the cultural and political turmoil in the early part of the second millennium in Finland made it possible for old female names to be quickly forgotten.

The names of role models must also have influenced naming conventions. Most of the popular medieval female names were names both of well-known saints and of Scandinavian queens. In addition, many of the new cultural influences (including names) introduced by the Church and foreigners, such as Germans and Swedes, enjoyed greater prestige than the old Finnish customs. It is no surprise that naming conventions in Finland were very similar to those in other areas around the Baltic Sea. This illustrates the ease with which personal names are borrowed from one place to another, but also underlines that poor, remote Finland was not isolated from other areas of Europe.

This article provides answers to many questions on female names in medieval Finland, but also leaves many for future research. There are, for example, the medieval court records of Jönköping and Kalmar, which were not included in this study and which could contain more names of female Finns. In addition, future studies could explore how much influence the names of ancestors had on naming practices. The question of pre-Christian Finnish female names is also unresolved. Sadly, the lack of early medieval documents makes this and certain other intriguing questions so difficult that they may never be resolved.

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